

## New Vice Chairman, EPCH - Mr. O P Prahladka

Mr. O P Prahladka, Chairman, Hitaishi Group and Lion India Group is the new Vice Chairman, EPCH. An Electrical and Electronic Engineer from Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra (Ranchi), Mr. Prahladka, has trained in Enterprise Management; Product Design, Development & Packaging; and International Marketing of craft products, musical instruments, fine arts, craft tools & craft working machines and related software. Mr Prahladka is acknowledged as an international & national expert in use of craft materials like wood, horn, bone, shell, jute, cotton, cotton canvas, leather and other natural fibres in the most innovative way. He is also a trained crafts person in these disciplines.



Mr. Prahladka is associated with EPCH since its inception and continues to play an important role for inspiring the new entrepreneurs in the craft industry. He has been instrumental in driving the growth of handicrafts in the East and North East region and by mentoring several artisan groups and new handicraft enterprises, in his capacity as Member COA and Convenor (Eastern Region). He is also an active Senior Faculty at various seminars & meetings of EPCH, Jute Product Development Export Promotion Council (JPDEPC), CAPEXIL, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), National Institute of Jute and Fibre Technology, NIRJA, NJB, Bengal National Chamber of Commerce & Industry and NABARD, etc.

In the Jute Sector, he has been the prime mover in building up jute diversified products, especially during his tenure as President (1996 to 2001), Association of Jute & Handicrafts Entrepreneurs of Eastern India (AJHEEI). He has been a significant part of establishing the Jute Products Development & Export Promotion Council (JPDEPC) in Kolkata.

Mr Prahladka's companies are considered one of the most innovative in creation of jute diversified products and support over 2000 artisans. He is on a mission to develop 300 new craft entrepreneurs in the Eastern Region during the next 18 months for which several entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes are already underway.

## Australian shoppers develop new retail habits

In positive news for homewares retailers, the household goods category had the highest growth figures year-on-year this April, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reporting 5.8 per cent growth.



According to the Australian Retailers Association (ARA), this high growth is a reflection of the strength of the housing market and the resulting effect on consumer confidence. However, the ARA states that there are challenges ahead for the retail sector, with overall growth slow.

National retail spending saw a 3.6 per cent growth, while clothing and footwear maintained a growth of 4.76 per cent due to heavy discounting, which means volumes are up at the expense of margins. The ARA says new players and competition entering the market has also had a significant effect on growth, causing further discounting.

The large service sector based states (Victoria and NSW) are growing strongly, while the traditional mining states (QLD and WA) are experiencing low growth as they go through a period of structural adjustment. Tasmania had a bumper result, with an impressive growth figure of 5.85 per cent which appears to be off the back of a strong economy and healthy tourism industry. ■ *Source: Australian Gift Guide*

## New weight regulations for furniture containers

The International Maritime Organization has set a July 1, 2016 deadline for compliance with an amended rule to its Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention. The new regulation requires measurement of shipping containers' and contents' weight - or verified gross mass - instead of just an estimate. The complication is that it's up to the 171 IMO member nations to implement the weighing process, verification of which on the bill of lading is the shipper's responsibility. Shippers sourcing from multiple countries are looking at a variety of processes and methods for weighing containers.



In short, containers cannot be loaded onto a ship without a verified gross mass (VGM). For furniture importers and vendors exporting abroad, the rule holds potential implications regarding cost and time. The good news is that shippers will have a three-month grace period after July 1 to reach full VGM compliance, according to a May 23, 2016 announcement from the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee.

The MSC acknowledged concerns that some leeway should be provided in order for any problems resulting from software updates required for the electronic collection and transmittal of verified gross mass data to be rectified without causing delays to containers being loaded. Hence, MSC has agreed that while there should be no delay in the implementation of the SOLAS requirements, it would be beneficial if administrations and port state control authorities could take a "practical and pragmatic approach" when enforcing them, for a period of three months immediately following July 1, 2016. The MSC emphasized that the stability and safe operation of ships - including the safe packing, handling and transport of containers - is not limited to the provision and use of VGM information and is also covered by a number of SOLAS regulations. ■

Source: *Furniture Today*

## Canada to begin furniture tip-over safety compliance testing

The American Home Furnishings Alliance (AHFA) has begun alerting its members that Canada will begin testing free-standing clothing storage units to determine if they comply with a voluntary ASTM furniture stability standard aimed to prevent tip overs. In a June 16 member bulletin, AHFA said that the Consumer Product Safety Program of Health Canada has notified it of its proposed product inspection and testing efforts of free standing clothing storage units more than 30 inches. Canada will use the voluntary standard, also known as ASTM (F2057), to evaluate the targeted products, which include chests, drawer chests, dressers and bureaus more than 30 inches high.

The AHFA website describes two stability tests associated with this standard. The first requires that the piece not tip when all the doors are opened at 90 degrees and all drawers are opened to the stop. If there is no stop, they must be opened two-thirds of the way. The second test requires that the piece not tip when each drawer is opened to the stop and a 50-pound weight is gradually applied to the front of a drawer. For doors, the weight is applied to the outer edge of the door, the AHFA website stated. Pieces must also have a warning label attached where it can be seen when the piece is in use including on the inside of the top drawer, and tip-over restraints must be included - with instructions - for each piece of furniture.



According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, a child dies every two weeks when a TV, piece of furniture or appliance falls over on him or her. It said televisions account for

70% of these incidents, and furniture and appliances account for 26% and 4% respectively. In addition, such tip overs account for 2,117 injuries per month and 25,400 per year. While AHFA said that a time frame has not been specified, it told members that products sold in Canada that do not meet the performance criteria of the standard will be subject to compliance and enforcement actions which may include seizure, mandatory recalls, financial penalties and criminal prosecution. The AHFA said that the agency had not provided information on when the testing will begin. However, it said that all warning labels for product sold in Canada must be in English and French. ■

Source: *Furniture Today*

## ED, EPCH meets delegates of participating nations at Centrallia, Canada

Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director, EPCH met delegates of participating nations and also had one to one meetings with other counterpart officials of the Chambers of Commerce/Trade Associations of different countries at the 4th edition of Centrallia, Canada. This was held from 25th to 27th May, 2016, at RBC Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Canada and was attended by over 700 participants comprising business owners, entrepreneurs, exporters and importers of over 30 countries as well as chambers of commerce, trade and investment agencies. More than 5000 business meetings took place during the two and a half day event in which many products and services were showcased as well. Here, all the organizations were familiarized about EPCH and its upcoming fairs were promoted through distribution of publicity material.



*Mr. Rakesh Kumar, Executive Director, EPCH, seen with Mr. Rajiv K Chander, Consul General of India to Vancouver, Canada*

**Mr. Rakesh Kumar called on Mr. Rajiv K Chander, Consul General of India, Vancouver,** to discuss issues pertaining to export of handicrafts and about holding a Craft Festival in Vancouver. The CGI assured EPCH to promote IHGF Delhi Fair among the nation's business community so that many more trade visitors from Canada can visit the show in India.

**Mr. Kumar also met Mr. Kim Smythe, CEO, Greater Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce** at Vancouver Islands

## Industry leaders meet and apprise Hon'ble Union Minister of Textiles, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani



## EPCH delegation meets Hon'ble Governor of Odisha, Dr. Senayangba Chubatoshi Jamir



who also agreed to promote and support the activities of the Council as well as buyer promotion (towards EPCH fairs) at Nanaimo.

**The EPCH Executive Director also visited the Consulate General of India, Chicago, USA and met Mr. D B Bhati, Consul (Pol. Com., & Visa)** to discuss various issues regarding handicrafts of India. Mr. Bhati was requested to consider providing long term visa to regular business visitors from US, attending the IHGF Delhi Fair. A proposal for holding Craft Festival of India at Chicago and other places was also discussed and Consul (Pol. Com., & Visa) appreciated the idea.